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**WANDERERS PAY
THE PRICE FOR
MISSED CHANCES**

WYCOMBE Wanderers threw away two invaluable Rothmans Isthmian League points, and possibly their chances of retaining the championship, when they were held to a 1-1 draw by Dulwich Hamlet at Loakes Park on Tuesday night. And they have only themselves to blame.

Football is all about scoring goals. It was in this department that Wycombe failed on Tuesday. Had they taken half the goalscoring opportunities that came their way against Dulwich, they would have sewn the game up comfortably by half time. They didn't and paid the penalty by surrendering two points.

Those two points could mean the difference between the title and nothing. Leaders Enfield scraped through with a second half goal against Slough at Maidenhead and are a clear ten points ahead of the Blues, who have a game in hand. So now, presuming Wycombe win their game in hand and beat Enfield at Loakes Park, they will still be four points adrift. Just to add to the pressure, those other contenders for the title, Dagenham, won 3-1 at Sutton. They are now two points behind Wanderers with a game in hand.

In my opinion, the championship is still far from decided. But Wycombe must now pin their hopes on Enfield faltering in their run-in to the season, if they are to be successful. And those hopes receded greatly after Tuesday night.

There will be many inquests over this 'failure' against Dulwich — the second draw against them this season. The truth is: Wycombe did everything right except putting the ball into the net. They

By STUART EARP

created a prodigious amount of opportunities including hitting the woodwork — but in the end those missed chances counted for nothing.

Many will say Wycombe failed to win because they were without their leading goalscorer Tony Horseman who received a leg injury at Bromley. His replacement, Dylan Evans, missed several chances but he certainly wasn't the only one and the Welshman did score Wycombe's only goal.

TRAPPED

Early on, Wanderers were repeatedly trapped off side by the Dulwich back four who were quick to come out of defence when danger threatened. But in the 13th minute, the visitors found themselves trailing. Steve Perrin crossed from the right and goalkeeper Alan Thomas fisted the ball to the edge of the box. Terry Reardon headed back to the penalty area where Howard Kennedy lifted the ball across the six yard box. With

Wycombe Wanderers 1, Dulwich H. 1

Dulwich at sixes and sevens, Evans rose high at the far post to head the ball down and into the net. Thirty seconds later Evans was put clean through when he slipped the offside trap but drove wide as Thomas advanced (No. 1).

Wycombe, who had struggled early on in the game, certainly eased those nerves with the opening goal and from then on gave the Dulwich defence a real grilling. Playing both long and short passes through the defence, they had their opponents firmly on the rack — but they forgot to turn the handle.

After 18 minutes Mick Holifield broke clear to send in a shot which Thomas saved well (No. 2) and a minute later Keith Searle, who is playing some of his best football this season recently, slung over a perfect cross from the left. Howard Kennedy raced in and towered above the defence but sent his header thumping against the crossbar (No. 3).

Throughout the first half, and for virtually the whole game, home goalkeeper John Maskell was never troubled. Skipper Alan Phillips tidied up superbly at the back while Keith Mead mastered the threat of 30-goal John Baker in the air. The situation was tailor-made for a handsome home victory.

The chances kept coming. In the 25th minute Evans beat Ken Baker and sent a superb crossfield ball into the path of Kennedy. He took the ball forward and lashed in a shot which struck a defender and rebounded into the grateful arms of Thomas (No. 4). Then Kennedy played a quick free kick to Dave Alexander but his low cross eluded everyone in the six yard box (No. 5).

Two minutes later, lady luck deserted Wycombe again. From a corner, Dulwich cleared to the edge of the box. Reardon sent a glorious 25-yard drive right into the top corner of the net but referee Underwood disallowed

the effort for offside. Wycombe fans complained bitterly that a defender had stayed on the line and therefore played Wycombe on side. In fact, he was over the goal-line and consequently off the field of play. My question does not concern the defender. I felt the Wanderers player offside in no way interfered with play (No. 6).

That was the last scoring chance of a half completely dominated by Wycombe. Totally in command at the back, holding the initiative in midfield and lively upfront, they looked all set to add to their first half goal after the interval. It never happened. Instead, the Blues became more and more frustrated and in the end had to share the honours of a game they ought to have won handsomely.

Dulwich moved centre-half Paul Webb into midfield in a bid to take a grip of the game in the second half but their over-elaborate attacks proved easy meat for Wycombe's defence. The action soon centred on the visiting goal. In the 52nd minute Searle beat Allison and slipped the ball inside to Evans who blazed high over the bar (No. 7). Minutes later Perrin nodded Kennedy's corner in the same direction (No. 8) and Evans also headed too high after good work by Holifield (No. 9).

Baker went into the referee's book for retaliating in the 64th minute, a measure of frustration from the Dulwich striker and their fifth caution of the season. A minute later Evans lofted a shot over the bar when well placed (No. 10). When that chance soared towards the crowd, Wycombe began to wither. They must have wondered what they had to do to score and anxiety began to creep into their play. The forwards and midfield began to lose their momentum and the confidence dropped dramatically.

As the game wore on it became increasingly likely that Dulwich would sense Wanderers' frustration and hit back themselves. The visitors, however, had not looked even remotely likely to beat Maskell, having failed to bother him throughout the game. So just how were Dulwich to score? The answer came in the 75th minute — in the shape of an own goal.

Dulwich had possession on the bottom wing where Dave Barker crossed into the box. More by instinct than anything else, Reardon tried to head clear but only succeeded in slicing the ball over the helpless Maskell and into the net.

In the last 15 minutes, Wycombe became more desperate. As Dulwich kept play in their opponents' half, Wycombe pumped hopeful balls upfield which came to nothing. Then, with a little over five minutes to go, disaster almost struck Wanderers. The referee awarded a free kick on the edge of the home box. Trevor Bladon clipped a lovely shot around the defence and past Maskell but the Blues were saved by the linesman's flag which ruled a Dulwich player offside.

The rapidly fading Kennedy was replaced by Graham McKenzie with only three minutes left, during which time Wanderers managed only one late scramble inside the Dulwich box.

The number of goalscoring chances in this match have been numbered throughout. In all there were ten. Only one was taken and if the title goes to Southbury Road, Enfield at the end of the season, the reason will be plain enough.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; D. Alexander, K. Mead, A. Phillips, G. Hand; H. Kennedy (sub. G. Mackenzie 87 mins.), T. Reardon, M. Holifield; D. Evans, K. Searle, S. Perrin.

DULWICH HAMLET: A. Thomas; K. Baker, P. Smith, P. Webb, S. Rogers; C. Pooley (sub. E. Allison 45 mins.), C. Richardson, T. Bladon; D. Barker, J. Baker, A. Jackson.

Referee: K. Underwood (Romford). **Half time:** 1-0. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe — Evans (13). **Dulwich** — Reardon o.g. (75).

Official paying attendance: 1,594. **Approximate total attendance:** 1,850.